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**TOBY ANN STAVISKY**  
Senator, 16th District  
**VICE CHAIRWOMAN**  
**MAJORITY CONFERENCE**

**CHAIRWOMAN**  
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER  
EDUCATION  
**COMMITTEE MEMBER**  
EDUCATION  
ETHICS & INTERNAL  
GOVERNANCE  
FINANCE  
HEALTH  
JUDICIARY  
RACING, GAMING,  
& WAGERING

*Via E-mail*

April 27, 2020

To the City University of New York's Board of Trustees,

I am reaching out to you because I am deeply concerned about the future of students who attend CUNY and their ability to continue their education as a result of the crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has had multiple negative impacts on CUNY's student body, exacerbating and magnifying inequalities that existed prior to the current pandemic. It is important that the CUNY system does what it can in order to mitigate the fiscal, social and psychological impacts on its system without creating new obstacles for students as they seek to complete their education.

Notably, the state and federal governments have taken unprecedented action to ease the burden on all New Yorkers in a number of ways, including but not limited to: suspending student loan payments, delaying tax filing deadlines, suspending enforcement of numerous regulations, imposing a 90-day eviction moratorium for renters, and allowing for the suspension of mortgage payments for 60 days. In light of the forgoing efforts that have been made across numerous sectors, public higher education systems should also attempt to ease the burden on their student population during this difficult period.

Because of the fiscal strain that the CUNY student body is under, I ask the Board to rescind the \$200 tuition increase and \$120 mental health fee for the 2020-2021 academic year, which the Board authorized in December 2019. This \$200 tuition increase coupled with the new mental health fee amounts to a cumulative increase of \$320. Given the number of students receiving full financial aid from state and federal sources, a tuition increase will largely be absorbed by campuses, whereas the \$120 mental health fee will impact students directly. In addition, there is no guarantee that wait times to see an on-campus counselor will be meaningfully shortened, particularly when a student is experiencing an acute mental health crisis and time is of the essence. Notably, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, recently froze tuition.

In an era of high unemployment—which the COVID-19 crisis is unfortunately engendering—access to quality and affordable public higher education is more important than ever. It is my hope that despite the current climate, CUNY does all that it can in order to continue to keep alive the promise of public higher education.

Sincerely,